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SOVIET REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE  
UNITED STATES ACTIONS ON ANTARCTICA

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE IN FULL

*Submitted by the*

**DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.*

*Concurred in by the*

**INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

*on 11 February 1958. Concurring were The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; and the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the IAC and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.*

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## SOVIET REACTIONS TO POSSIBLE UNITED STATES ACTIONS ON ANTARCTICA

### THE PROBLEM

To estimate Soviet present intentions and their reactions to:

1. The assertion of US territorial claims in Antarctica accompanied or shortly followed by a US call for a conference of interested states to discuss and sign a treaty establishing a multinational regime for Antarctica.
2. A US call for such a conference, without assertion of US claims.

### ASSUMPTIONS

3. That the US may assert a territorial claim to the unclaimed portions of Antarctica and reserve its rights and possibly make claims in other areas.

4. That the US may invite other states having an interest in the Antarctic (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, UK and USSR) to join in establishing a regime in Antarctica for:

a. Encouragement and facilitation of international cooperation in the field of scientific activity for the maximum benefit of mankind.

b. Regulated development, utilization, and conservation of the natural resources of the region, in the general interest.

c. Insuring through effective measures that the region be used for peaceful purposes only.

To this end, and without prejudice to any claims asserted by claimants, the US may propose a conference of the states listed above to draft in treaty form a statute for the proposed regime. Signature of this treaty would not prejudice existing claims, or oblige signers to transfer full sovereignty to the regime. However, it might be proposed to freeze the status quo to the extent of prohibiting changes in existing claims or the assertions of new claims. The resulting regime would assume jurisdiction and control in the fields provided by the treaty, and submit reports from time to time to appropriate bodies of the UN. With respect to the

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regulation of economic and scientific development, it would be provided that the regime would treat member states and non-member states and their nationals on a basis of equality.

5. Public announcement of the proposed actions would be made around the mid-

dle of 1958, to enable interested countries to make plans for the period following the International Geophysical Year (IGY) within the framework of a common policy. It is contemplated that such an announcement would be preceded by consultation with non-Bloc countries and organizations.

### SUMMARY

6. The current Soviet effort in the Antarctic is impressive in size. We believe the program is serving a variety of interests, political and psychological, as well as economic and military. A major interest, however, is scientific, and is part of the long established and long-range Soviet program of research in the earth sciences. It is also specifically related to current problems in such fields as electronic communications, weather forecasting and control, etc. We believe the Soviets will remain in the Antarctic after the IGY.

7. We believe the USSR, following its established policy, would not recognize any US claims, whether or not coupled with a call for a conference to establish a multinational regime for the area. We think it unlikely that the USSR will assert a specific territorial claim, preferring the freedom resulting from a reservation of all rights.

8. If the US made a claim and the USSR had not, the Soviets probably would not accept an invitation to such a conference, particularly if the proposal attempted to freeze out further claims. The Soviets might suggest a broadened conference, or, more likely, propose UN discussion, believing they could get some support from

nonclaimants. The chances of the USSR accepting such an invitation would be increased if it too had made a claim.

9. If a conference were proposed before claims had been made by either the US or the USSR, we believe the USSR would probably attend, although the working-out of any proposals regarding military neutralization would present difficulties. The USSR might alternatively propose UN discussion. The prospects of the USSR's actually taking part in a regime for the area would depend on the extent to which it was satisfied in its desires for unhampered access and for a status in which it could fully protect its interests. The Soviets would not make their decision on attending a conference or joining a regime on the basis of considerations relating to the Antarctic alone, but on the basis of much wider considerations involving their posture and objectives in other East-West negotiations.

10. The USSR would probably ignore a regime established without its participation, just as it has ignored past claims, and would continue its activities.

11. We believe that the Soviet leaders may feel that their interests in Antarctica would be best served by taking the initiative and calling for a conference with a

membership and agenda of their own choosing or proposing UN consideration of the Antarctic. Such action would be

more likely if they became aware of the nature of discussions in the US and elsewhere.

## DISCUSSION

### I. PROBABLE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANTARCTICA TO THE USSR

12. *Introduction.* Current Soviet activities in the Antarctic are on a larger scale than those of any other country except the US. They maintain five bases and are establishing one more during this year. (See attached map.) The Soviet program, while identified with the International Geophysical Year (IGY), includes a number of scientific fields outside the IGY program, such as geology, mineral exploration, mapping, navigation studies, etc. From established bases and by ships, exploration of wide areas of the Antarctic is being undertaken. The scope and size of the Soviet effort is greater than would be required by such traditional interests as economic, political, and direct military needs. We believe that a major concern is the collection of scientific data in a wide variety of fields, including basic research.

13. *Scientific Interests.* The USSR has a long established and highly developed program for accumulating scientific data in all the earth sciences including the geophysical fields. Such a program requires a multitude of observations during a long period and over wide areas. We believe that a major cause for the extensive Soviet Antarctic activity is the acquisition of data for this program while at the same time serving political and prestige needs. The results of such scientific research are important to a variety of fields of vital concern to the USSR. For example, the Antarctic may be an important factor in global weather, including that of the Northern Hemisphere. Long range forecasting is of importance to the Soviets as it relates to such matters as agricultural production in marginal lands and the availability of the Northern Sea Route. Antarctic activities might also contribute to studies of weather control, in which the Soviets are taking an active interest.

14. There are a number of other scientific fields in which we believe the Soviets will develop interests in the Antarctic, including studies of the upper atmosphere, of problems involved in electronic communications, and observations of satellite vehicles. The Soviets are planning to fire high-altitude rockets in the Antarctic for scientific research, including cosmic ray observations. In connection with all the scientific efforts, we believe that the Soviets see major advantages in having their own observation posts in the Southern Hemisphere.

15. *Strategic Interests.* We have no evidence of current Soviet military interest in the Antarctic beyond the potential military value of the scientific and other data obtained. We do not know of any Soviet submarine or other military activities in the Antarctic area either in connection with the IGY program or independently. While it is possible that the Soviets will develop an interest in using the Antarctic for missile testing, submarine and aircraft basing, or as part of a military communications net, we believe such possibilities to be unlikely. There is also the possibility that the area will be of value in monitoring earth satellites and space vehicles used for reconnaissance and other military missions.

16. *Economic Interests.* The Soviets have been whaling in Antarctic waters since 1946, and this activity will increase as new whalers and auxiliary ships now under construction are completed. In addition, results of current prospecting for minerals may possibly lead to increased Soviet interest in Antarctica. However, the difficulties of access, extraction and production are great. We do not believe that economic interests will be an important factor in Soviet decisions affecting the area.

17. *Political Interests.* To date the USSR has neither made any territorial claims nor recognized the claims of any other power. The

official Soviet political position on Antarctica is embodied in Soviet notes to Norway in 1939 and to the US, UK, France, Norway, Australia, Argentina, and New Zealand in 1950, in which the USSR refused recognition of any territorial claims, reserved its rights on the continent, and asserted its right to participate in any political settlement, based on the alleged discovery of the continent by Admiral Bellingshausen in 1820. Soviet comment has referred to these notes as evidence of their long interest in Antarctica, and now the exploration and establishment of stations in the past two years can also be cited by them as evidence of their right to participate in a political settlement. All the Soviet stations are in the sector claimed by Australia, and exploration has to date also been concentrated there. However, future Soviet explorations in other areas, particularly on the coast of the unclaimed sector, are planned. The USSR has ignored the Australian claim, and asserts that the "sector" principle which it applies in the Arctic is inapplicable in the Antarctic.

18. *Extent of Recent Exploration.* The Soviets have engaged in widespread exploration beginning in late 1955. Aerial mapping and landings of small parties (94 landings in 1956-57) have supplemented the major land expeditions and the extensive sea explorations. The Soviets are planning in the current year to explore along the shores of the unclaimed sector. Land expeditions in 1956-57 failed to reach the South Geomagnetic Pole and the "Pole of Relative Inaccessibility," but expeditions have recently reached the former objective, and they are now en route to the latter, to establish bases at each. A major part of the current Soviet effort is the making of oceanographic and hydrographic surveys of the coasts of the continent.

19. *Present USSR Intentions.* Existing reasons for the interest of the USSR in Antarctica will not end with the IGY and it is possible that Soviet activities in the area will increase rather than decrease after 1958. On several occasions, including discussions of post-IGY activities, Soviet officials have stated that the USSR intends to remain active in Antarctica and to maintain at least some of its present stations. It seems clear that the

USSR at present believes that its interests and prestige require it to maintain a position in Antarctica at least equal to that of any other country.

20. There is some evidence of a possible Soviet intention to establish a permanent zone of operations. The Soviets have laid a foundation for a claim by reserving their rights, by refusing to recognize claims of other countries, and by their recent activities in exploration and settlement. Nevertheless, we believe there is little likelihood that the USSR intends to make territorial claims under present conditions. Soviet assertion of claims in the areas in which they are operating, the Australian-claimed sector, would upset the status quo under which current operations are proceeding harmoniously, and would cause an immediate dispute with Australia and possibly other interested powers. Soviet assertion of claims in the unclaimed areas of the continent—particularly between 90° and 150° West longitude—would likewise probably upset the harmony of the present situation. Furthermore, the USSR has as yet no historical basis for claim in the unclaimed areas through discovery, exploration, or occupation. The USSR probably considers the most advantageous position to be one of asserting no specific claims and reserving all its rights. Its sphere of operations would not be circumscribed by its own actions and it would maintain a flexible position from which it could act as its own immediate needs required. It could thus avoid and exploit disputes among interested powers, while maintaining the posture of a major world power with considerable interest but no territorial aspirations in the Antarctic.

## II. ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE SOVIET REACTIONS TO PROPOSED US INITIATIVES

21. In the light of the above, we believe that the Soviet reaction to any US moves on Antarctica would be determined both by a continuing desire to assure their unhampered access to the area, primarily for scientific purposes, and by considerations of general Soviet prestige, political position, and propaganda posture. Thus their reactions could be conditioned by events and situations wholly dis-

sociated from the Antarctic. They might wish not to appear unreasonable in this matter lest their conduct prejudice other and more important negotiations. For example, it is possible that the Soviets would modify an initial intransigent stand in order to heighten the picture of willingness to go half-way toward reducing possible East-West conflicts. In any event, for reasons of prestige as well as manipulative opportunity, the Soviets will continue to refuse to accept anything less than equal status in the Antarctic.

22. Soviet estimates of Western intentions will, in any case, be weighted with suspicion, particularly if they learn that prior consultation has been limited to Western countries. Furthermore, we believe that the Soviets will be alert to seize opportunities to exacerbate Free World differences over Antarctica. The Soviets would estimate that the reactions of both claimant and nonclaimant countries to any proposal would provide some opportunities for exploitation.

23. *Soviet reactions to US claims accompanied or followed by the call for a conference.* The Soviets would probably believe that the US was attempting both to expand and strengthen its position in Antarctica, and to minimize or possibly terminate Soviet activity in the area. The assertion of US claims would represent a reversal of US policy of non-recognition of claims and probably would be considered by the USSR as a threat to its own freedom of action. A US claim, whether or not accompanied by a call for a conference, would be portrayed by the USSR as an example of American imperialism and disregard for the rights of others. Moreover, if the call for the conference came some time after the US had made its claim, the Kremlin would try to make it appear that the US had retreated under Soviet pressure.

24. In either case, the USSR would almost certainly not recognize the US claims, would reassert its refusal to recognize all other claims, and would at least reserve its own rights. It is possible that the Soviets would make a formal claim, probably not specifically to contradict that of the US, but to demand and establish recognition of its status as a

claimant. Any such Soviet claim would at least embrace all areas it has explored to date (see attached map) with reservations of rights in all other areas. However, the advantages of non-recognition of all claims, and consequent lack of any recognized limits to Soviet operations, would probably lead the Soviets to continue to avoid any specific territorial claim.

25. If the US had made a claim and the USSR had not, the Soviets would probably not agree to participate in the conference lest they appear to acquiesce in the claims of the US and others. Such a rejection would be almost certain if the call for a conference proposed that there be a freeze on claims. In either case, the USSR would probably make a counter proposal for a greatly broadened conference or more likely, for a UN discussion based on the principle of the non-recognition of all claims. The Soviets probably could marshal support among Asian and African opinion — particularly from such neutralist countries as India — for the view that nonclaimants were being discriminated against. In 1956, India suggested that "The Question of Antarctica" be put on the provisional agenda of the UN General Assembly. The matter was not pressed at that time, but India might be glad to present such an item again to the 1958 UNGA.

26. In the unlikely event that the USSR had made a claim prior to the call for a conference, the likelihood of Soviet participation would be considerably greater. Nevertheless, Soviet conduct at such a conference would probably be obstructionist until and unless it achieved the safeguards noted below as requirements for its participation in a regime.

27. *Reactions to the proposal for a conference and international regime, without declaration of American claims.* If the conference were proposed without US assertion of claims, and with one of its stated objectives being the military neutralization of the area, the USSR might recognize the sincerity of the US proposal, and conclude that the West considered it impossible entirely to ignore the Soviet interest in the area. In these circumstances, we believe the USSR would probably agree in principle to the proposal and attend the conference in the belief that its freedom of action

would not be impaired. The Soviets might, however, make the alternative proposal of UN consideration of the whole Antarctic question. An attempt to define neutralization either in the proposal or in the conference in terms of the purposes for which military weapons, equipment, or personnel could be introduced would probably lead to protracted discussions, particularly if presented in such a way as to arouse Soviet suspicions of US intentions.<sup>1</sup> However, the Soviets might accept the proposal that a function of the regime would be to determine from time to time what activities would be prohibited within the concept of neutralization.

28. Prospects for the USSR actually joining a regime would depend upon the extent to which the charter met their desires, especially those relating to sovereignty, the method of making decisions, and rights of access. Regarding sovereignty, the USSR almost certainly would not agree to a regime in which it had a status less than that of the seven countries now making claims. It would probably seek either recognition of its status as a claimant (if it had made claims) or more probably the nullification of all claims.

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<sup>1</sup>The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the penultimate sentence should be replaced by the following: "Should an attempt be made, and persisted in, to modify the principle of complete military neutralization, as for example by an exception for weapons of primarily defensive characteristics, the USSR would undoubtedly suspect Western intentions and believe that the West meant to establish a basis for introducing military forces into the Antarctic. It would so claim in its propaganda, and would intensify its UN or other international efforts in which it would expect to find stronger support. It would probably refuse to join the regime, and it is at least possible that it might, in such a case, attempt to develop military elements in its own installations similar to those it claimed the US intended to develop."

29. The Soviets would be most reluctant to agree to majority vote of the regime members, and would probably insist upon unanimous decisions. However, if the Soviets considered that their actual operations would not be subject to control by the regime, and particularly if world public opinion strongly favored the proposed regime, the USSR might agree to participation even without a veto right. The Soviets would probably have no problem regarding access, since the regime would provide freedom of access to all countries. In addition, the Soviets would believe that there was little likelihood that any regime would attempt to eject them by force.

30. *Soviet actions in the event of USSR non-participation in the international regime.* The Soviets have ignored claims in their operations in Antarctica, and will continue to do so after IGY. (The Australian "invitation," hastily offered after the Soviets expressed the intention to establish stations in their claim sector, was ignored by the Soviets.) If the regime were established without Soviet participation, it is probable that, in the absence of effective regime sanctions, the Soviet Union would maintain bases, continue explorations, and carry out any operations which they thought important. They would, however, try to conceal any activities which might cause an adverse reaction in world opinion.

### III. POSSIBLE SOVIET INITIATIVES

31. We believe that the Soviet leaders may feel that their interests in Antarctica would be best served by taking the initiative and calling for a conference with a membership and agenda of their own choosing or proposing UN consideration of the Antarctic. Such action would be more likely if they became aware of the nature of discussions in the US and elsewhere.

## Soviet Stations and Exploration in the Antarctic



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